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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request of the Security Council contained in the statement issued by its President on 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25), in which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and the situation in that country.

2. The report builds on my previous report (S/2011/311), dated 16 May 2011, and provides an update on political, security, socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights developments and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), which replaced BONUCA in January 2010.

3. The reporting period was marked by (a) the holding of legislative by-elections on 4 September, which were boycotted by the opposition; (b) significant progress in the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants in the north-west but still without clear prospects for reintegration; (c) the commitment by the last domestic armed group not party to the June 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement to adhere to it; (d) the deterioration of the security situation in the north-east following clashes between two armed groups; (e) very limited progress in the security sector reform process, despite such reform having been an essential recommendation of the inclusive political dialogue of December 2008; (f) the partners' round table held in Brussels on 16 and 17 June 2011; and (g) simmering socio-economic tensions in the capital.

II. Political situation

4. The Constitutional Court overturned close to 20 per cent of the results of the 23 January and 27 March legislative elections on grounds of irregularities, and ruled that 13 reruns, and one election which had not taken place in Bouar, be held. In the absence of the Independent Electoral Commission, which had been dissolved in the aftermath of the January and March elections, the Minister of Territorial

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Administration and Decentralization established on 14 July a transitional committee for elections responsible for (a) preparing and organizing legislative by-elections in the 14 outstanding constituencies; (b) drafting a legal framework for the establishment of the permanent technical secretariat responsible for the organization of future elections; and (c) revising the electoral code, drawing on the lessons learned during the elections held earlier in the year.

5. On 4 September, by-elections were held peacefully in the 14 constituencies. The opposition, including the coalition known as the Front pour l'annulation et la reprise des élections 2011 (FARE), boycotted the by-elections. The transitional committee for elections released the results on 7 September, and the results from 13 constituencies were confirmed by the Constitutional Court on 26 October. The election in Bouar was invalidated and will be rerun. The ruling Kwa Na Kwa (KNK) party won seven seats, independent candidates three seats and KNK-affiliated parties two seats. Despite the boycott by the former ruling party, the Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain (MLPC), one of its members ran and won a seat. Following these elections, the composition of the 104-seat National Assembly stands as follows: KNK, 62 seats; independent candidates, 28 seats; KNK-affiliated parties, 11 seats; MLPC, 2 seats; and the Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain, 1 seat. The Assembly includes 13 women. KNK and its affiliated parties hold a large majority in the Assembly with 73 of 104 seats. With its parliamentary majority, the Government has ample space to implement its programme, which the Prime Minister, Faustin Archange Touadera, presented to the National Assembly on 18 May.

6. The Government is now focusing on reforming the electoral code and establishing a permanent electoral management body. From 1 October to 6 November, the electoral assistance project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a study tour to Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Ghana and Senegal for the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and staff of his ministry to learn best practices from the experience of those countries in establishing and developing the capacity of inclusive and professional electoral administrations.

7. My Special Representative, supported by a senior representative of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, held a series of meetings in August with national and international stakeholders, including leaders of the presidential majority and the opposition, the President of the National Assembly, representatives of civil society organizations and members of the diplomatic community, to seek their views regarding the electoral process and reforms and to identify areas in which there are shared views. From the meetings with members of FARE, the Special Representative gathered that they were willing to take part in dialogue with the Government but continued to demand a rerun of the legislative elections, believing that only a consensus Government, including representatives of the opposition, would be able to ease political tension and allow for meaningful electoral reforms.

8. There is an emerging consensus among national and international stakeholders that electoral reforms should be conducted in a consensual and inclusive manner. The revision of the electoral code and the establishment of a permanent electoral management body could serve as an opportunity for renewed dialogue between the Government and the opposition on issues of common concern. The Government is

planning to convene a meeting with national stakeholders on electoral reforms by the end of November 2011.

9. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Government and the opposition remains difficult. On 27 August, a rally organized in Bangui by FARE, and authorized following BINUCA facilitation, was allegedly disrupted by KNK sympathizers, reportedly leaving seven people injured and two cars damaged. On 10 September, the Government prevented MLPC from holding a rally in Bangui on the grounds that permission had not been secured from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization. The opposition leaders strongly criticized the Government for not respecting basic democratic principles, including freedom of assembly, which is enshrined in the Constitution. The Government's reply has been that opposition parties should request proper authorization prior to their gatherings. In this connection, the Prime Minister informed my Special Representative of the Government's intention to clarify the law on political rallies.

III. Security situation

10. The lack of State authority outside the capital has led to a serious security vacuum in many parts of the country. The national security and defence forces, which should function as primary security providers in the remote areas of the country, are under-resourced and largely incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities. The Government has yet to assure adequate security in areas where disarmament and demobilization of former combatants and the dismantling of checkpoints have taken place in implementation of agreements between the Government and armed groups, and among armed groups themselves. While the security situation in the west remained relatively calm, clashes between armed groups and occasional, albeit decreasing, acts of violence allegedly perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) occurred in some areas in the eastern part of the country.

11. In order to improve exchange of information and coordination with the Government and its partners, BINUCA has designated a focal point for LRA-related activities and established a working group that includes Government officials, representatives of the embassies accredited to the Central African Republic, regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations country team. The Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX) has been requested to join the working group as an observer.

12. The presence of armed groups with large numbers of foreign fighters continues to pose a serious threat to peace and stability in the country and in the region as a whole. On 23 May, the Presidents of Chad, the Sudan and the Central African Republic signed a tripartite agreement in Khartoum to enhance security in the border areas through joint patrols. The agreement has not yet been implemented. The thirty-third ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa is scheduled to be held in Bangui in December 2011.

13. There have been mixed results in the peace process with armed groups. On 12 June, the last armed group not party to the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP), signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government, a development considered as a major step towards durable peace in the country. On 27 August, a splinter group of CPJP led by

Mahamat Salle joined the Peace Agreement. However, in September, the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) and CPJP clashed in Haute-Kotto and Vakaga provinces, causing considerable material damage and claiming the lives of dozens of belligerents and civilians. On 20 September, BINUCA called for a ceasefire between the armed groups and for protection of civilians. Subsequently, on 28 September, BINUCA facilitated a visit of the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization to Ndelé and Birao to meet with Abdoulaye Hissène, leader of CPJP, and Zacharia Damane, leader of UFDR. Following the visit, the matter was referred to the National Mediator, Archbishop Paulin Pomodimo, for follow-up. On 8 October, the belligerents signed a ceasefire agreement in Bangui under the auspices of the Government and the National Mediator and with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and MICOPAX.

14. The ceasefire agreement called for the cessation of hostilities by the two groups, the removal of all checkpoints, an immediate end to human rights violations, the withdrawal of all forces from the town of Bria within eight days, cantonment of troops at established sites and a commitment by CPJP to urgently sign the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The agreement also called for the establishment of a two-tier implementation mechanism, namely, a political-level follow-up committee composed of the National Mediator and representatives of the Government, MICOPAX, BINUCA and the African Union; and a technical-level verification mechanism comprising representatives of the national armed forces, MICOPAX, BINUCA, UFDR and CPJP. A peace caravan involving the National Mediator, the two leaders of the armed groups, traditional and religious leaders, parliamentarians from areas affected by the conflict, MICOPAX, the African Union and BINUCA travelled from 14 to 20 November in the areas affected by the clashes to convey messages of peace, tolerance and reconciliation to the local communities.

15. While the opposition and civil society leaders have been highly critical of the Government's apparent inability to reassert its control over the entire national territory and to prevent the escalation of incidents of conflict, the Government has demonstrated its commitment to address the security challenges by bringing all armed groups into the peace process through the mediation and facilitation efforts led by the National Mediator. The latter has benefited from logistical support and substantive advice from BINUCA. In this regard, the Policy and Mediation Division of the Department of Political Affairs deployed a team to Bangui to assist the National Mediator during the negotiations between UFDR and CPJP. BINUCA will continue to actively support the national mediation and facilitation efforts for effective follow-up to the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement and subsequent ceasefire agreements.

16. On 13 June, the Chadian rebel leader and self-styled "General" Baba Laddé, of the Front populaire pour le redressement (FPR), an armed group present in the north-western part of the Central African Republic since 2008, signed a communiqué with the National Mediators of Chad and the Central African Republic. In the document, FPR announced its willingness to lay down its weapons and enter into discussions towards the signing of a peace agreement within a month, with the understanding that this would lead to the repatriation to Chad of some 400 to 500 of its elements. Since July, the National Mediator of the Central African Republic has shuttled between the Chadian authorities and FPR to find common ground on the

implementation modalities of the communiqué. The talks are unfortunately stalled, mainly over the issue of security guarantees for the return of Baba Laddé to Chad.

17. One of the factions of the armed group known as Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD), based in the Kaga Bandoro area of Nana-Gribizi province, is demanding the repatriation of the FPR combatants to Chad as a precondition for it to disarm. Meanwhile, FPR has reportedly continued to acquire weapons and to recruit extensively in the region, in contravention of the commitments it made in the 13 June communiqué, jeopardizing the smooth implementation of outstanding disarmament and demobilization operations in the north-west.

IV. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

18. Significant progress has been made in the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants following the launch of related activities by President François Bozizé on 25 June in the north-west, in line with the Government's commitment to complete the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process by the end of 2011. The operations started in Ouham-Pendé province on 13 July and concluded on 11 September. Some 4,777 APRD combatants, including 350 women, were disarmed and demobilized, and 3,558 arms were collected, including 3,491 handmade weapons and 67 war weapons.

19. The Government provided 100,000 CFA francs (US$ 222) for each former combatant and 270,000 CFA francs (US$ 600) per zone commander, in addition to the reinsertion kit and the transport allowance provided by UNDP. This first phase of the disarmament and demobilization process was conducted without any significant security incident. The next step will be to launch the operations in the Kaga Bandoro area for 1,300 combatants of APRD and 121 combatants of the Union des forces républicaines.

20. Following the establishment of the working group on reintegration in December 2010, a national strategy for the reintegration of former combatants was finalized and endorsed by the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Steering Committee on 8 July. The Minister of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration appointed a National Coordinator for Reintegration on 20 July. The national strategy for reintegration aims at addressing the individual reintegration needs of demobilized combatants and the needs of host communities, in particular through socio-economic and reconciliation activities. The strategy also envisages the integration of demobilized combatants into the security and defence forces and the civil service. However, the nexus between disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform has yet to be fully developed. The Government has already contributed an estimated US$ 8.9 million to the disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion operations.

21. The overall financial requirements for the national reintegration strategy amount to US$ 28 million: US$ 8.5 million for reinsertion activities and US$ 19.5 million for reintegration activities. There is an urgent need to mobilize funding in this regard. BINUCA and the United Nations country team are working together on mobilizing resources to (a) reinforce the capacity of the recently established national coordination mechanism for reintegration to formulate reintegration programmes and raise funds; and (b) implement labour-intensive reinsertion projects that also benefit the host

communities. In that regard, I hope that relevant synergies can be developed with the community recovery programme to be funded by the World Bank and the development hubs programme funded by the European Union.

22. Despite the progress achieved, daunting challenges remain. CPJP has indicated its intention to join the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, for which additional resources will be required. Recent clashes between UFDR and CPJP have prevented the start of combatant verification and disarmament and demobilization operations in the north-east, for which funding is available.

V. Security sector reform

23. There has been very limited progress on security sector reform in the last six months. This is due in part to the weakness of the national Permanent Technical Secretariat established to coordinate and ensure coherence across relevant ministries. It has yet to design a credible and viable national security sector reform strategy. The existing strategy was originally developed in October 2009 and subsequently revised. It consists of 10 discrete projects with very limited financial contribution from the Government, an unbalanced emphasis on military reform and no time frames. The June 2011 partners' round table did not yield additional resources to fund security sector reform despite its having been identified by stakeholders as a priority issue.

24. At the request of my Special Representative, an assessment mission reviewed the overall disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform programmes for the Central African Republic from 18 to 22 July. The mission recommended that BINUCA further enhance its role as political facilitator by expanding its engagement with key international actors on the ground to develop and leverage international positions on critical issues affecting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes. This is particularly important to ensuring an inclusive process that will enhance and strengthen the national security vision. My Special Representative has been emphasizing the importance of a national consensus, engaging not only the Government but also other key national actors, on an inclusive vision and midterm strategy for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform.

25. In August, the Minister Delegate for Defence, who chairs the Security Sector Reform Steering Committee, requested BINUCA to help revive the security sector reform process. In response to the request, BINUCA proposed a road map with timelines and a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities among national stakeholders. The road map outlines a pragmatic approach to developing strategies for each ministry engaged in security sector reform, culminating in a comprehensive national strategy. This document, which also explores ways of re-linking the technical and political actors engaged in security sector reform, has yet to be considered by the relevant authorities. A meaningful dialogue needs to be re-established between national authorities and international partners in order to build mutual trust and ensure credibility and coordination of the entire security sector reform process.

VI. Socio-economic situation

26. On 16 and 17 June, the Government of the Central African Republic, with the support of the Peacebuilding Commission, the World Bank, UNDP and the African Development Bank, organized a partners' round table, hosted by the Government of Belgium in Brussels, to present the second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper for 2011-2015. Funding requirements for the programme amount to US$ 9.8 billion, including regional infrastructure projects. National consultations are being held to finalize the strategy paper with national stakeholders including the National Assembly. Looking ahead, it will be important for the national authorities to build upon this important event and vigorously follow up with their partners for the assistance and support needed.

27. During the reporting period, simmering social tensions escalated in the capital. On 3 August, seven retired military personnel and gendarmes were arrested for looting the National Mediator's office and holding him and the European Union Ambassador hostage, while claiming 31 months of pension arrears. Furthermore, disgruntled university professors launched a strike demanding unpaid salary arrears and appropriate ranking in accordance with a May 2006 decree. On 23 September, the strike was suspended for a period of six months following an agreement with the Government. The compromise contributed to defusing tensions and prevented the loss of the academic year. Meanwhile, on 28 September, the national coalition of trade unions submitted a list of grievances to the Minister of Transport including (a) the payment of salary arrears; (b) the establishment of an independent trust fund for the payment of wages; and (c) better implementation of regulations governing general public services. I encourage the Government and trade unions to maintain a constructive dialogue on these grievances.

28. From 30 June to 13 July, a mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visited the country to review recent economic and financial developments and conduct discussions on a medium-term programme that could be supported by an arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility. The mission found that there were significant fiscal slippages that had led to the accumulation of domestic and external payments arrears. The authorities agreed to take corrective measures as a basis for resuming programme discussions. From 3 to 16 November, another IMF mission visited the country to conduct article IV consultations under the IMF Articles of Agreement and assess with the Government the progress made in the implementation of the corrective measures.

29. The Government has indicated its determination to improve transparency and accountability in the management of public funds. On 8 August, the Prime Minister set up a commission mandated to audit the civil service in collaboration with the Court of Auditors. On 10 September, at the conclusion of the first national seminar on public finances, President Bozizé called for transparency in the elaboration of budgets and the management of public funds and expressed his firm commitment to fighting corruption through the prosecution of any offender. Subsequently, on 8 October, President Bozizé removed the Director-General of the Treasury for allegedly delaying investigations into embezzlement of State funds.

VII. Humanitarian situation

30. During the reporting period, the humanitarian situation was marked by new waves of displacements of civilians fleeing violence in various parts of the country. In September, the fighting between UFDR and CPJP in the Vakaga and Haute-Kotto provinces displaced some 15,000 people. In early August, local violence between herders and villagers in Ouham province forced another 2,500 to flee.

31. According to a review of displacement patterns in the country carried out by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat from April to September, there are now an estimated 169,500 victims of displacement in the country. This figure includes 103,000 internally displaced persons and 66,500 recent returnees (both former internally displaced and refugees) who have gone back to precarious and volatile provinces, mainly in the north-west, and remain in need of humanitarian assistance. A total of 17,750 refugees from neighbouring countries remain in the Central African Republic.

32. While access to vulnerable populations in Bamingui-Bangoran province has improved, access in Vakaga province and south-eastern provinces remains very limited and precarious owing to persistent criminal activity and the LRA threat, including risks of abduction and looting. In these areas, a small number of non-governmental organizations provide humanitarian assistance through the remote control approach.

33. The United Nations has spared no effort to address the humanitarian situation. During the reporting period, the World Food Programme (WFP) assisted 278,000 vulnerable and conflict-affected persons with essential food items, including 231,500 schoolchildren, 16,900 internally displaced persons, 14,000 refugees, 6,000 HIV/AIDS patients, 5,000 malnourished children under 5 years of age and 3,900 pregnant and lactating women.

34. In response to a cholera outbreak in the Lobaye and Ombella-Mpoko provinces in September, the Government and development partners, including the United Nations, established a contingency committee to coordinate activities to prevent further transmission of cholera, including a communication campaign aimed at households in both urban areas and villages. Hundreds of volunteers were mobilized by the Government and civil society to make door-to-door visits to families.

35. There is a continuing shortfall in humanitarian funding for the Central African Republic. Of the US$ 139 million requested for the country in the 2011 consolidated appeal, only US$ 58 million had been mobilized by late October 2011, covering less than 41 per cent of the assessed needs. The most under-financed areas are early recovery (12 per cent funded), multisectoral assistance to refugees (12 per cent), protection (19 per cent) and health (20 per cent). The Common Humanitarian Fund for the Central African Republic has mobilized US$ 8.2 million in 2011, compared to US$ 11.4 million in 2010.

VIII. Operational activities in support of recovery and development

36. During the reporting period, projects carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and non-governmental organizations enabled 159,740 children, including 61,993 girls, to

go back to primary school. So far in 2011, 177 classrooms have been refurbished or constructed and 10 safe learning spaces set up to ensure the security of 800 preschool children. Additionally, in response to the lack of qualified teachers in the country, UNICEF has trained 1,178 parent-teachers.

37. Within the framework of the 2011-2015 poverty reduction strategy paper, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) helped the Government design the agriculture component of the second pillar of economic revitalization. Major agricultural development niches were identified and FAO supported the Government in developing a strategy on rural development, agriculture and food security.

38. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported the development of project documents and advocacy needed to prepare for the general population and housing census planned for 2013. UNFPA also supported the fourth multiple indicator cluster survey, which revealed that 5.9 per cent of the general population was affected by HIV/AIDS in 2011 as compared to 6.2 per cent in 2010. This is indicative of progressive stabilization of the infection.

IX. Human rights and the rule of law

39. Since my last report, the human rights situation has remained of serious concern, despite efforts by BINUCA and international partners. BINUCA noted several cases involving acts of violence perpetrated by the security and defence forces against civilians, including extrajudicial executions. There are also frequent incidents of abuse, including harassment and extortion of the population at checkpoints, in the areas controlled or dominated by armed groups. My Special Representative, in consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), is undertaking a thorough review of the human rights situation in the country to recommend ways in which it can be better addressed.

40. During the reporting period, BINUCA continued to conduct training sessions for security and defence forces focusing on rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law. BINUCA also organized a training programme for 42 members of civil society and community-based organizations, including seven women, on monitoring human rights situations and violations.

41. Two important human rights issues continue to warrant appropriate attention from the national authorities. First, there are growing numbers of victims of "mob justice" following allegations of witchcraft. The victims are mainly marginalized individuals, including widows, street children and orphans. Second, several human rights monitoring missions, predominantly in Ouaka province, highlighted the unrelenting practice of genital mutilation of girls. BINUCA has also observed persistent cases of sexual and domestic violence, especially in Ouham and Ouham-Pendé provinces. The victims are often denied justice as a result of family pressures.

42. In response, BINUCA facilitated the national consultation process on sexual and gender-based violence in preparation for the Great Lakes region Heads of State summit meeting to be held in Kampala in December 2011, with the support of the OHCHR Great Lakes office. BINUCA has also secured funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund to support a partnership programme between a national

and an international non-governmental organization on medical, psychosocial and legal assistance to victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including those affected by LRA attacks, in the town of Bangassou in Mbomou province.

43. BINUCA also engaged in technical cooperation activities with the Government and implemented capacity-building programmes for national institutions and authorities as well as civil society organizations, including in remote areas. BINUCA provided technical advice and financial support to the national authorities for the drafting of their periodic report on implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

44. On the rule of law, in July, President Bozizé convened the High Judicial Council and announced long-awaited appointments and reshuffling of magistrates within several jurisdictions. The period under review was also marked by the trial of two journalists, originally charged with incitement to hatred and civil disobedience and finally condemned for libel against the Minister Delegate for Defence, whom they accused of embezzlement of pension funds for military retirees. This trial raised the question of freedom of the press in the country and concluded with a landmark ruling that dismissed the criminal charges and reaffirmed that the 2005 law on the freedom of communication, which decriminalizes press offences, supersedes the criminal code.

45. Through its project on reinforcement of the rule of law, UNDP continued to support the implementation of the 10-year national plan for the reform of the judicial system. In an effort to bring justice closer to the people, UNDP supported the organization of 12 mobile courts in the Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Kemo and Nana-Gribizi provinces from 25 July to 26 September. These mobile courts made rulings for 460 persons, including 115 women. UNDP also supported the design of working tools for the systematic reporting of the hearings and provided logistical support to the regional courts of Paoua, Bocaranga and Batangafo. Finally, UNDP rehabilitated or constructed two police stations, five detention centres, five courthouses and three law centres located in various parts of the country.

46. UNDP supported the Office of the High Commissioner in charge of Decentralization and Regionalization in organizing a national workshop for the validation of draft laws and regulations that will form the legal framework for decentralization and should soon be submitted to the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly for approval. UNDP, in partnership with the European Union, France and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, also supported the National Assembly in organizing a capacity-building workshop on representation and legislation.

47. During the period under review, BINUCA focused its activities in the corrections sector on involving communities in monitoring offenders' rights and facilitating the social reintegration of former inmates. On 30 and 31 August, BINUCA recruited and trained a first group of 20 volunteers, including 6 women, from the community surrounding the prison of Bossembele (Ombella-Mpoko province) with a view to expanding the training to other locations. In October, UNDP and BINUCA trained 30 registrars and correctional staff, including 7 women, on human rights law and principles and human rights-based management of prisons.

X. Child protection

48. Children remain associated with Central African armed groups that have signed the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement (UFDR, FDPC and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice), as well as with CPJP and self-defence militias. Children were reportedly used by both groups in the clashes in September between CPJP and UFDR. On 14 July, a joint mission of UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Danish Refugee Council met with CPJP leaders in Akroussoulbak, verified the presence of approximately 75 children in the group's ranks and began negotiation of an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. On 19 October, APRD signed an action plan with the United Nations to end the recruitment and use of children, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). On 20 November, CPJP signed a similar document, witnessed by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy.

49. The country task force on monitoring and reporting of grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict in the Central African Republic was established on 27 July in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). Members include BINUCA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and WFP. Since its establishment, in addition to gathering and monitoring information on violations against conflict-affected children, the task force has played a key advocacy role with the Government and armed groups to end and prevent grave violations. This has facilitated the inclusion of provisions on the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in the poverty reduction strategy paper.

50. Several positive developments for children's rights occurred during the reporting period. On 18 July, the Prime Minister launched the inter-ministerial National Council for Child Protection (NCCP), in which the country task force on monitoring and reporting has advisory status. The Council will promote children's rights within the Government and serve as a forum for regular interaction between the country task force and the Government on grave violations against children.

51. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization organized the first-ever national forum on birth registration with the support of UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and BINUCA. Since August, members of the committee to follow up on the forum have been supporting the Government's efforts to implement the commitments made at the forum to promote and improve birth registration.

52. Since June, UNICEF, BINUCA and OHCHR have conducted over 10 training programmes for members of the security and defence forces, MICOPAX and civil society representatives on women's and children's rights in Bangui and in five provinces (Bamingui-Bangoran, Haut-Mbomou, Mambere-Kadei, Nana-Gribizi and Nana-Mamberé). In addition, UNICEF trained Uganda's People Defence Forces troops in Obo on the six grave violations and the military code of conduct.

XI. Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission

53. A delegation of the Peacebuilding Commission visited the Central African Republic from 10 to 15 October to assess progress made in the country's peacebuilding process and meet with key national and international stakeholders. During the visit, the Government provided the delegation with an update on the finalization of the poverty reduction strategy paper, which may serve as the basis for the Peacebuilding Commission's future engagement with the country after the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic concludes at the end of 2011. The Commission also encouraged the authorities to take all necessary measures to implement the firm commitments made by the new Government, in particular those relating to electoral reforms and the completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The national authorities assured the mission of their determination to fulfil those commitments, as well as those made in the areas of good governance, the fight against corruption and rule of law, including reform of the judicial system. In its mission report, the Commission delegation offered a set of conclusions and recommendations regarding the regional situation, the importance of moving ahead swiftly and decisively in the reintegration of former combatants following the disarmament and demobilization phases of the process, the development of a national security sector strategy and the strengthening of relations with IMF.

XII. Peacebuilding Fund

54. During the reporting period, the implementation of the 14 projects funded by the second allocation of US$ 20 million from the Peacebuilding Fund under the revised priority plan steadily progressed, reaching an estimated completion rate of 30 per cent by 30 September. Eight United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, namely FAO, UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, the United Nations Office for Project Services and WFP, and their national partners carried out activities on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, rule of law, good governance and the generation of socio-economic peace dividends in conflict-affected areas.

55. The activities include capacity-building for 89 women's associations in income-generating activities (UNFPA), the distribution of 3,500 copies of the new criminal code and criminal procedure code and training for 28 magistrates (UNDP and OHCHR) and the training of 30 Government social workers and staff from two national non-governmental organizations in psychosocial and legal assistance for female and juvenile offenders (UNICEF and UNDP). Five microfinance institutions benefiting 10,837 people were also established in rural areas by UNDP.

XIII. Integration and a common United Nations vision for the Central African Republic

56. BINUCA has been operating as an integrated office since January 2010. All elements of the United Nations presence in the country have agreed on a set of peacebuilding priorities reflected in the integrated strategic framework for 2011 and

the United Nations Peacebuilding and Development Assistance Framework for 2012-2016, which is closely aligned with the poverty reduction strategy paper. During the reporting period, BINUCA and the United Nations country team have developed action plans, including resource requirements, for the pillars of the Peacebuilding and Development Assistance Framework, including (a) peace consolidation, good governance and the rule of law; (b) investment in human capital and the fight against HIV/AIDS; and (c) promotion of sustainable and durable development. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks have also been developed to enable the assessment of progress made in achieving the agreed peacebuilding results.

XIV. Observations and recommendations

57. The Central African Republic is at a critical juncture. The new Government has indicated its commitment to consolidating peace and addressing outstanding peacebuilding challenges through a comprehensive programme. However, the absence of political space for the opposition has added to the atmosphere of tension in the country. Respect for freedom of expression and assembly, for the rule of law and for national institutions are essential for democracy. I welcome the Government's intention to work towards an all-inclusive political approach for the reform of the electoral code and the establishment of a permanent electoral management body responsible for organizing future elections. This should contribute to restoring confidence among all national stakeholders.

58. I also welcome the significant progress made in the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants in the north-west. The completion of this process, especially the sustainable reintegration of former combatants, is crucial for the security and stability of the country. The response of the international community should be commensurate with the efforts made by the Government. I once again urge the national authorities to develop a credible and viable security sector reform strategy, and the country's bilateral partners to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and to assist the Government in enhancing the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of its security institutions and oversight bodies.

59. I am concerned that the recent fighting between armed groups has had severe repercussions on the humanitarian and security situation. I welcome the 8 October ceasefire agreement and urge that it be fully implemented. CPJP must join the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement without delay. It is important that all armed groups remain committed to the Peace Agreement and desist from violence and preying on civilians. My Special Representative will reinforce BINUCA support for the effective implementation of the Libreville Agreement as well as other follow-up agreements.

60. The presence of the Chadian rebel leader Baba Laddé on the territory of the Central African Republic poses serious security risks and threatens peace consolidation efforts. I encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to liaise with the Government of Chad and intensify its efforts in support of negotiations between Chad and the rebel leader. BINUCA will continue to support the Government's efforts in this regard.

61. I remain concerned about human rights violations and abuses, particularly in conflict zones, and the level of impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of such crimes. I urge the national authorities to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations, including members of security and defence forces and armed groups, are held accountable. Ensuring accountability is critical to addressing impunity and deterring the commission of new rights abuses. BINUCA and national human rights organizations will continue to closely monitor and report on the human rights situation in the country and assist relevant stakeholders in the protection and promotion of human rights. I encourage the Government of the Central African Republic and its international partners to extend the maximum possible support to the country's justice system.

62. I welcome the signing of an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children by APRD and CPJP. I strongly encourage all other listed armed groups (see S/2011/241 and A/65/820-S/2011/250) to sign similar action plans. Children must be enrolled in schools, not in armed groups. I note with concern that self-defence militias continue to recruit and use children. I urge the Government to use its influence over those militias to ensure the removal of children from their ranks, and to sign an action plan with the United Nations.

63. Women continue to suffer severe discrimination despite all the encouraging efforts made by the Government and civil society organizations. I reiterate my appeal to the Government and the National Assembly to expedite the adoption of the revised family code, which will go a long way in further enshrining gender equality in the national legislation. I also call upon the Government and other national stakeholders to take additional necessary steps to increase women's participation in politics, including in the Government and the National Assembly, with the support of international partners.

64. I welcome the recent initiatives and commitments by the Government to promote good governance, especially in the management of public finances and natural resources, and in combating endemic corruption, which constitutes a strong disincentive to partners and investors. I encourage the Government to more meaningfully engage with the Bretton Woods institutions. Their assistance is critical for the revitalization of the economy and for the development of the country.

65. I would like to express my appreciation to regional and international organizations, including the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the African Union, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, for their contributions, and to bilateral partners for their continued support of the Central African Republic. I also commend the Peacebuilding Commission for its unrelenting attention to the Central African Republic.

66. The mandate of BINUCA will expire on 31 December 2011. In view of the leading role the Office is called upon to play in the peace consolidation and reconciliation process and of the need for continued United Nations integrated support for the Central African Republic in facing peacebuilding challenges, and following consultations with the Government of the Central African Republic, I would like to recommend that the mandate of BINUCA, as approved by the Security Council in its presidential statement (S/PRST/2009/5), be extended for another year, until 31 December 2012. In the coming year, BINUCA will continue to implement its mandate in close cooperation with national authorities and the partners of the

Central African Republic, with a particular focus on reconciliation, the completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the restoration of State authority throughout the national territory, security sector reform and the promotion of the rule of law, gender equality and human rights.

67. Finally, I would like to commend the staff of BINUCA for their commitment and hard work in a difficult environment under the leadership of my Special Representative, Margaret Vogt, and the United Nations country team for its tremendous efforts in support of peacebuilding in the Central African Republic.